



About 6,000 people — including more than 2,000 CUPE delegates — gathered outside Montreal City Hall midweek during CUPE's 24<sup>th</sup> National Convention. The local representing 5,000 members wants to negotiate an agreement that protects public services, limits contracting out, gives regular status to a number of employees, and provides wage increases in line with market wages. Look inside for more photos from Convention.

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# Counterpoint

## Solidarity and strong leadership at CUPE National Convention



Delegates to CUPE's 24<sup>th</sup> National Convention vote on resolutions.

By CATHERINE LOULI

CUPE's 24<sup>th</sup> National Convention concluded in Montreal on October 9. Close to 2,500 delegates and staff worked hard, debated with passion — passing close to 100 resolutions — and set a course for the next two years. Close to 40 per cent of the delegates at the convention were first-time delegates.

CUPE members approved a new Strategic Directions Program for the 2009-2011 period, focused on defending and improving

pensions, strengthening bargaining capacity and fighting concessions, supporting shop stewards, continuing to support local economic development and fighting privatization. Paul Moist was re-elected national president and Claude Généreux was re-elected national secretary-treasurer.

International guests from Burma, South Africa, Colombia and the United Kingdom added a global flair to our convention. Throughout convention, delegates

spoke passionately about the importance of global solidarity and the need to support our Global Justice Fund which focuses on worker-to-worker projects throughout the world.

For CUPE members who were unable to make it to the national convention in Montreal, check out our convention website at [cupe.ca/convention2009](http://cupe.ca/convention2009), where you will find a list of podcasts, videos, resolutions, strategic directions and more.

[cupe.ca/convention2009](http://cupe.ca/convention2009)

## Time to improve CPP

By ROBERT BELLEROSE

The economic crisis and corresponding crash of the financial markets has served to highlight the necessity for radical change in the pension system in Canada. The attack on workers' pensions has been one of the most significant negative outcomes of the economic crisis. In Canada, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board lost \$23.6 billion with its investments, a decline of 18.6 per cent for the year ending March 31, 2009. The Caisse de Dépôt, which manages Quebec's pension plan and large employer plans, lost over \$40 billion in 2008, a decline of 25 per cent.

At the recent CUPE National Convention, pension experts hosted a forum on pension plans and the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). According to pension experts, we are at a turning point that may not have a positive outcome. While CUPE members are struggling to preserve their retirement conditions through collective bargaining and when needed resorting to job action, the federal government is considering legislation, Bill C-51, that would drastically alter the CPP. And the news is not much better concerning the Régie des rentes du Québec, Quebec's equivalent of the CPP.

Consider just one of the proposed changes to the CPP:  
*Continued on page 8*



## Counterpoint

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Visit CUPE's website at [cupe.ca](http://cupe.ca)  
or contact us at [cupemail@cupe.ca](mailto:cupemail@cupe.ca)

Managing Editor: Catherine Louli  
Communications Director: Louise Leclair  
Translation: Louise O'Neill  
Graphic Design: Marnie Thorp

Editorial Assistants: Hélène Bélanger, Marjorie Savoie

Contributors: Dan Gawthrop, Janet Szliske, Roseanne Moran, Lou Arab, Beth Smillie, Dennis Lewycky, Pat Daley, James Chai, Robert Lamoureux, Luc Tittley, Kevin Wilson, Wendy Forbes, Robert Bellerose, Alexandre Boulerice, Danielle Savoie, John McCracken, Catherine Louli, Allison Gifford, Sébastien Goulet, Karin Jordan, Chris Lawson.



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# Activists chart course through Strategic Directions



Paul Moist speaking to delegates at convention.

#### BY ALEXANDRE BOULERICE

After four days of discussion and debate, the 2,500 delegates assembled at the CUPE National Convention in Montreal and adopted an ambitious and substantial Strategic Directions Program. This document defines CUPE's priorities for the next two years; it will serve as a guide for the union's political action work and collective bargaining.

"I was impressed by the quality of the interventions," said National President Paul Moist. "On several issues, including the economic crisis and the environment, our members demonstrated not only their passion but also their remarkable analytical insight. Our activists are moving this great union in the right direction." Priorities set by the delegates at the convention include: defending free collective bargaining, protection of existing pension plans and negotiating plans for those who have none, engaging in political action at the municipal, provincial and national levels and having a "green" lens in our

work from collective bargaining to political action.

"Now we have to give life to these key strategic directions," said Moist. "And we will do this not only in our budget choices, but in our everyday work, in our division conferences, with our committees and work groups, our staff and all our local unions in the field."

Debate on the convention floor highlighted the delegates' concern with the bargaining climate. Free collective bargaining has been under attack, notably through the imposition of special legislation; CUPE members want to protect their fundamental right to negotiate freely. "The delegates spoke passionately of the need for decent, well-paying jobs with good pension plans. This is the way to create a just society and to ensure the means for funding social programs," added Moist.

The current economic crisis has entailed the failure of a number of stock market investments, undermining pension funds of thousands of workers. Many delegates came

to the microphone demanding action to protect their pension plans, to protect the money that they have been patiently putting aside for their old age. "The pension discussion provoked a wider debate acknowledging the need to fight to provide all workers with access to a pension plan worthy of the name. It is a matter of dignity and fairness," added Moist.

CUPE activists understand that the defence of public services and the improvement of life in their communities emanate from political action, and that the union must be resolutely involved in that area. CUPE members are leading the charge for a more environmentally responsible union, creating green jobs and pursuing objectives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in post-Kyoto international negotiations.

"CUPE's strategic plan for the period of 2009 to 2011 is ambitious and delegates at CUPE's 24<sup>th</sup> National Convention are committed to its implementation," said Moist.

[cupe.ca/paulmoist](http://cupe.ca/paulmoist)



## CONVENTION DRUMMING GROUP CAUGHT THE RHYTHM

CUPE delegates participated in the lunchtime Convention Drumming Group led by internationally renowned drum master Joe Mephisto, known for his north Brazilian samba drumming style.





## PIERRE RABY, HEALTH & SAFETY AWARD WINNER

Pierre Raby, a bus driver and member of CUPE 1983, was the winner of the CUPE National Health and Safety Award. Raby has worked tirelessly to make life safer for drivers and metro operators. He convinced his employer to fund an ergonomics study, pushed to have safety cameras installed on buses, and worked with bus manufacturers on the design of buses to make them safer.

[cupe.ca/convention2009](http://cupe.ca/convention2009)



## HELEN KENNEDY, GRACE HARTMAN AWARD WINNER

Helen Kennedy, of CUPE 79, was awarded the Grace Hartman Award at the CUPE national convention. The award was created 10 years ago to celebrate the leadership role of CUPE National's first woman president. Like Hartman, Helen Kennedy is a tireless champion of equality and promoter of women in leadership. She's inclusive, inspiring and a great example of how women make CUPE strong.

[cupe.ca/podcast](http://cupe.ca/podcast)



## CATHERINE PETERS, DISABILITY RIGHTS ACTIVIST

Long-time Hospital Employees' Union (HEU) activist Catherine Peters was awarded the CUPE National Disability Rights Activism Award. Peters has worked for graduated return to work programs, and has pushed for better long-term disability benefits. She also helped develop HEU's Blue Poppy button campaign to remember workers killed or injured on the job, and played a key role in the union's disability rights handbook.

**Listen to the ceremony and an interview with Peters about her activism at**  
[cupe.ca/podcast](http://cupe.ca/podcast)

# The rise and fall of Saskatchewan's P3 Secretariat

By BETH SMILLIE

Just nine months after the Saskatchewan government of Brad Wall established the P3 Secretariat, it is burying it.

In explaining the secretariat's short lifespan, a government spokesperson stated there were not enough large-scale projects to make a public-private partnership program viable.

CUPE Saskatchewan, a vocal critic of P3s in the province, welcomed the announcement. "We were worried the Saskatchewan Party might pursue P3s at any cost quite literally, because the government's commitment appeared to be based purely on ideology," says Tom Graham, president of CUPE Saskatchewan. "Fortunately, common sense prevailed because P3s are a terrible waste of taxpayers' money."

The Saskatchewan government had big plans for P3s, according to a briefing note (dated October 15, 2008) obtained by Saskatoon blogger Joe Kuchta. The note confirmed: "Any and all areas of traditional P3s (design, build, finance, own and operate) will be considered for projects over \$25 million with a term of at least 20 years that do not fit well within the traditional procurement approach."

In addition, the education ministry had encouraged local school boards to identify

opportunities for P3 schools, while it developed a P3 school policy.

But the policy never materialized. Last November 2008, Education Minister Ken Krawetz acknowledged P3s "may not be the right fit in the province's school system." He told a Star Phoenix reporter that after he toured a P3 school in New Brunswick, that province's education minister "suggested the use of a public-private partnership would not be repeated."

"There is a lot of opposition to these privatization schemes in the province," says Graham. "And that opposition increases with knowledge about P3s."

A Viewpoints Research poll, commissioned by CUPE Saskatchewan late last year, found 50 per cent of Saskatchewan respondents flatly rejected using P3s for schools, hospitals and bridges, while 35.7 per cent supported it.

The Saskatchewan Party government says it may consider P3 projects in the future – a possibility that CUPE Saskatchewan will be monitoring closely.

CUPE Saskatchewan organized a cost-shared campaign last year to oppose P3s in the province. The campaign, "Pay More, Get Less" included fact sheets and television ads.

[cupe.ca/saskatchewan](http://cupe.ca/saskatchewan)

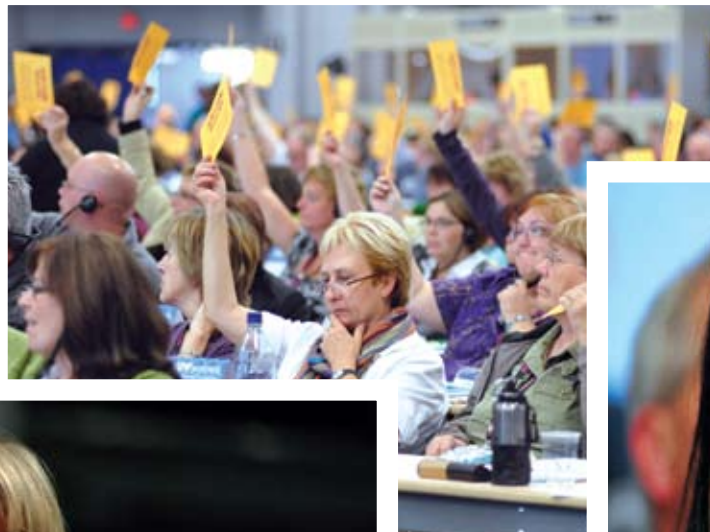


## LITERACY CHAMPION PAULINE MERRIGAN

Pauline Merrigan was awarded CUPE's National Literacy Award at the national convention in Montreal. Merrigan is a member of CUPE 4400, Toronto District School Board workers. As a caretaker who works with chemicals every day, Pauline was in the perfect position to understand the importance of clear language and workplace health and safety.

[cupe.ca/podcasts](http://cupe.ca/podcasts)







# CUPE National Convention 2009



Photos Marilyn Mikkelsen



# Work bytes



**B.C.'s Rock for Justice was a huge success, with information tables and great music.**

## B.C. Update

CUPE 4728 members in Grand Forks helped make the case for bringing solid waste collection, recycling, and compostable yard waste in-house. Council and mayor voted to proceed and CUPE members will start providing the services on Canada Day, 2010.

Education issues were high on the agenda this fall, as locals responded to government funding cuts. CUPE K-12 locals formed a provincial bargaining council in September. More than 200 members from universities, colleges and K-12 attended the October Champions for Public Education Conference, headlined by Joel Bakan, author of *The Corporation*.

At the community health sector's October bargaining conference, delegates were reminded that upcoming bargaining will be a challenge in all sectors, as the provincial finance minister has vowed zero increases for public employees.

In early November, the B.C. government passed Bill 21, an unprecedented attack on collective bargaining rights that imposed a contract on ambulance paramedics. [cupe.ca/britishcolumbia](http://cupe.ca/britishcolumbia)

## Foothills School Division joins CUPE family

School support workers at Foothills School Division will merge their staff association into the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

The educational assistants, clerical, technical and library staff sought to join CUPE feeling their employer did not respect their association or their collective agreement. The 180 school support workers join 7,500 other CUPE members from the K-12 sector in Alberta. CUPE represents more school district employees in the province than any other union.

[cupe.ca/alberta](http://cupe.ca/alberta)

## Saskatchewan government must do better

The 12,600 CUPE health care workers including dietary, housekeeping, laundry and maintenance staff, licensed practical nurses, special care aides, and medical technologists and technicians – have been without a new agreement for more than 19 months. [www.cupesaskhcc.ca](http://www.cupesaskhcc.ca).

The average wage increase for Saskatchewan public sector employees was 4.9 per cent in 2008 and 4.1 per cent in 2009.

But health employers are expecting health care providers to accept much less – now that the government's essential services legislation is in place. About 80 per cent of CUPE health workers have been deemed essential and unable to strike.

CUPE health care providers voted 88 per cent in support of job action in response to the employers' concessions and second-class treatment at the bargaining table.

[cupe.ca/saskatchewan](http://cupe.ca/saskatchewan)

## Manitoba maintains momentum

Leadership elections in Manitoba have changed the faces but maintained the momentum of union and party action. Former CUPE Manitoba President Kevin Rebeck has been elected president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour. Greg Selinger has been elected leader of the NDP in Manitoba, making him premier as well, replacing Gary Doer.

CUPE 998 (Manitoba Hydro) averted a strike when a tentative agreement was reached. Members have been offered wage increases of 8.5 per cent over four years plus increases in benefits and pension.

[cupe.ca/manitoba](http://cupe.ca/manitoba)

## Firsts in Ontario

Members of CUPE 4000, representing 60 specialized workers at Travois medical transfer, ratified their first collective agreement.

McMaster University's 130 post-doctoral fellows (PDFs) – members of CUPE 3906 – have their first contract. The post-doctoral fellows achieved a deal, the first of its kind for PDFs in Canada that included wage and benefit gains, improvements in job security language, better working hours and working conditions, as well as other gains.

Ontario University Workers Coordinating Committee (OUWCC) is beginning a tour of campuses that are or will be in bargaining in 2010 to discuss anti-privatization strategies and continue their work in coordinated bargaining.

[cupe.ca/ontario](http://cupe.ca/ontario)

## New alliance on the St. Lawrence

On October 15, Quebec longshoremen sent out a heartfelt message. Throughout the day, in the ports of Montreal, Quebec City, Trois-Rivières, Bécancour and Sorel, our members wore black sweaters, a symbol of mourning, as a





**CUPE health care workers in Saskatchewan say enough is enough!**

reminder of the daily threat hanging over them. For the last three years, the longshoremen have seen an increase in security-related incidents and conspicuous employer laxity on these issues.

As a result, in recent months, CUPE longshoremen unions of the four largest ports of the St. Lawrence agreed to join forces and work together on a regular basis.

[cupe.ca/quebec](http://cupe.ca/quebec)

**New Brunswick: a deal is a deal**

The New Brunswick Labour and Employment Board will not hear the complaint filed by the New Brunswick Council of Nursing Home Unions (NBCNHU) until January 2010.

The hearing, scheduled for October, was postponed after the Board received requests from nursing home administrators asking for more information on the hearing.

“We are asking the Board to enforce the four-year collective

agreement we ratified before the provincial budget,” says Valerie Black, president of the NBCNHU.

[cupe.ca/newbrunswick](http://cupe.ca/newbrunswick)

**Stopping contracting out in PEI**

CUPE 1174, representing Summerside Police and Fire Services, wants clarification on the government’s plan concerning the central 911 Dispatch System.

The full dispatch functions are the work of CUPE members in Summerside and CUPE 1174 wants to ensure that the government will respect their collective agreement.

[cupe.ca/pei](http://cupe.ca/pei)

**Working with an NDP government**

Leadership and staff in Nova Scotia came together recently for a 2009 Priorities and Planning meeting that was dedicated exclusively to learning how to work with an NDP government.

The central question being posed was, “How do we build a relationship with the NDP government that will protect our members’ jobs and working conditions while creating strong communities?”

[cupe.ca/novascotia](http://cupe.ca/novascotia)

**Newfoundland and Labrador municipal elections**

Five CUPE members in Newfoundland and Labrador offered themselves as candidates in the September 29, 2009 provincial municipal elections.

Of the five hopefuls, two were successful in their bid.

On the province’s Burin peninsula, Bill Wakeley from CUPE 1860 was successful in his bid for mayor of the community of Lewin’s Cove.

In the Town of Bay Bulls on the southern shore of the province’s Avalon Peninsula, Patrick O’Driscoll from CUPE 1560 was successful in his first-ever bid for town councillor.

[cupe.ca/newfoundland](http://cupe.ca/newfoundland)

**HEU prepares for bargaining**

More than 270 members of the Hospital Employees’ Union (HEU) gathered at the union’s 18<sup>th</sup> Wage Policy Conference to lay the foundation for upcoming negotiations by setting priorities, discussing demands and electing a new bargaining committee.

Over two days of deliberations, the top bargaining priorities emerged: job security provisions that cover contracting out and other restructuring initiatives in health care; special wage adjustments for specific occupations; protection of benefits, and recognition for on-the-job training responsibilities.

HEU will be negotiating a new collective agreement to cover its 40,000 members working in hospital and long-term care facilities around B.C. The current contract expires on March 31, 2010.

[heu.org](http://heu.org)



**CUPE 3906, McMaster University postdoctoral fellows, successfully picket for a first contract.**



**National Secretary-Treasurer Claude Généreux and National President Paul Moist celebrate a new CUPE office in Fredericton.**



# Unionism without borders

An interview with Claude Généreux, national secretary-treasurer of CUPE

BY SÉBASTIEN GOULET

**SG:** Claude, why has CUPE chosen to dedicate a portion of its resources to international solidarity?

**CG:** Working on the international scene also benefits our own workplaces. Here's the best example that comes to mind: recently, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour of 45,000 members of CUPE's Hospital Employees Union (HEU) in British Columbia. They had challenged Bill 29, a draconian provincial law that put a stranglehold on negotiations. The Court's decision was based primarily on international conventions signed by Canada on freedom of association and collective bargaining rights. This is a reminder that international standards provide crucial support throughout the world and we must continually work to protect them.

**SG:** Why is Colombia a priority for CUPE in terms of international solidarity?

**CG:** The Harper government has tabled a bill to enforce a free trade agreement between Colombia and Canada. During the U.S. presidential campaign, in a debate on free trade with Colombia, Barak Obama asked his opponent John McCain: "Shouldn't we be discussing the situation of workers in that country? According to the reports, workers are dying there." It was eloquently put, and expressed a concern that Harper clearly does not share.

**SG:** When you say "workers are dying there," you're not referring to workplace accidents.

**CG:** Definitely not. There are more workers and trade unionists murdered in Colombia than in the rest of the world combined. All the data indicate that at least 2,200 workers have been murdered or have disappeared in Colombia since 1991, including 600 since Alvaro Uribe came to power in 2002. So it's still happening. And the *Washington Post* recently reported that 97 per cent of these murders have never been solved.

**SG:** More broadly, how would you characterize CUPE's involvement in international solidarity over the years?



CUPE delegates to the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) congress meet children at the Bosele Dawn children's centre in a township outside of Bela Bela, South Africa.

**CG:** Ever since CUPE was founded, we have been involved in international solidarity. In the 70s, there had been a tremendous, worldwide humanitarian effort following a major earthquake in Nicaragua, but the Somoza government squandered the donations. We got involved and strongly opposed this. In the 80s, South African resistance movements attempting to end apartheid made an appeal to us. At the time, as an activist in my local union, I received the president of an illegal South African health workers union (NEHAWU). He came to inform us, but also to learn how to organize a union in a democratic society. In the 90s, when the World Bank and the IMF were imposing their economic model of privatization, our colleagues from South Africa resisted with the support of CUPE.

**SG:** Elsewhere in the world, do we often find the same multinationals, the same "privatizers" as here?

**CG:** Absolutely. It's "the same gang," to put it simply. Sometimes they hide behind subsidiaries or consortiums, but they're the same transnationals: the same enemy, the same struggle.

**To listen to the podcast of this interview with Claude Généreux, go to [cupe.ca/claude-generoux/podcast](http://cupe.ca/claude-generoux/podcast)**

## Pension reform long overdue



Pensioners gather to demonstrate on Parliament Hill in Ottawa to protect pension plans.

*Continued from page 1*  
currently, the normal retirement age is 65. In the event of earlier retirement, the pension is reduced by six per cent annually. For example, retirement at age 60 entails a 30 per cent reduction in benefits. But the federal bill currently under consideration would raise the "penalty" to 7.2 per cent instead of the current six per cent.

As part of the Strategic Directions Program adopted by delegates, CUPE has committed to lobby the federal government and have Bill C-51 changed so that there are no penalties for

accessing CPP at age 60. The union will devote resources to participate fully in the national debate on pensions in Canada. CUPE will support the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) in their call to: double the CPP benefits; raise the percentage of average career earnings replaced by the CPP to 50 per cent over a period of seven to 10 years, to equal \$1,635 per month; and, to finance these changes with a slight increase in workers' and employers' contributions (three per cent over a period of several years).

**[cupe.ca/pensions](http://cupe.ca/pensions)**